

(Washington DC) This morning, Representatives Charlie Gonzalez, Rubén Hinojosa and Silvestre Reyes took part in the House Republican field hearing on border security. This morning's hearing in Laredo, Texas was the second of two hearings scheduled during the 4th of July recess after House Republicans refused to negotiate with Senate Republicans on a final immigration bill.

House Republicans took the unusual step of scheduling field hearings on immigration three months after the Senate passed its immigration bill (S. 2611) and seven months after the House passed its version (H.R. 4437.) The bill is currently stalled since House and Senate Republicans have not begun the conference committee necessary to moving immigration legislation forward.

Throughout the proceeding, Democrats pointed out that Republicans have repeatedly blocked Democratic efforts to increase funding for border security and for more border patrol agents in accord with the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

"During my seven years in the House, I cannot remember ever holding hearings after a bill passed," said Congressman Gonzalez (D-San Antonio, TX.) "Clearly, the House Republicans are delaying progress on securing our nation's border in the hopes that using immigration to inflame Americans will allow them to retain control of the House in this fall's elections. In the meantime, border security will continue to be neglected as it has under Republican control of the White House and Congress. They have had six years to address this issue but only now it has become a priority issue with the fall elections looming on the horizon."

"I believe that these hearings aren't really about border security and immigration policy - they're about election year politics," said Congressman Hinojosa.(D-McAllen, TX) "I grew up on the border, I have lived on the border my whole life, and now I represent the border. We live on the front lines of our broken immigration system, and we all know that we need to fix our immigration system and enforce our laws, but enforcement alone does not work - it has failed us the past 12 years. Our border communities want comprehensive reform. We want laws that are fair and that work."

"These hearings quite plainly reflect the Republicans' lack of commitment to

comprehensive immigration reform," said Congressman Reyes (D-El Paso, TX), a 26 ½ year veteran of the U.S. Border Patrol and the lead Democrat at the hearing. "Rather than hammering out the details of this long-overdue plan before the elections, they choose to stall by holding 'hearings' on legislation that both chambers of Congress have already passed. Rather than focusing on the comprehensive immigration needs of this country, they choose to look solely at the security of our Southern border. Having spent over 26 years protecting the border, I see the Republican approach for what it is, and empty rhetoric is not what the nation needs right now."

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